

Why are Dick and Jane Not Collaborating?

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What are the barriers to collaboration? Are there not enough tools available? Are the environments not easily enough to use? What is keeping the last ten years efforts from the everyday scientist?

Collaboration is hard when folks are at the same location and it is baffling to believe that it can be collaborating at a distance or the integration of technology will make it simple. DOE has been very supportive of the construction of technology, but it has been done in the absence of studies of how the technology is used. Partnering of technology groups with groups who understand how people work and how to test the use is missing.

Is there a lack of interest in collaborating? A quick browse of the SciDAC website shows that somewhere between 25% – 33% of all projects are single PI projects,. Every other project has at least two collaborators that are not colocated, so it seems that a lack of interest in collaborating is not the answer. What is holding users back?

Are there missing technologies? We have shared audio and video, we have shared web sites, we have electronic notebooks that are shared, are these tools used for collaboration beyond test cases and small user communities? What defines success and adoption? Does the Grid solve the problem or increase the problem?

Collaboration is an ongoing effort, as one builds the infrastructure and encourages its use to the point that groups depend on it, does DOE support this, what is the plan for long-term user support. Once the research ends where does the effort go? Can a collaboration technology research project once it develops something of use to the community, expect support to make it robust, to document it, to support to the community? Is there a DOE infrastructure that can take on a supporting role? ESnet?